



Omaha Metropolitan Area
TOURISM AWARDS

3 COUNTIES · 2 STATES · 1 DESTINATION

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Metro Area Tourism Awards Honors the Best of the Best *Ten Local Residents Receive Top Honors*

OMAHA, NE. May 9, 2019 – This week the community honored the more than 17,280 people who work in the local tourism industry at the Third Annual Omaha Metropolitan Area (OMA) Tourism Awards.

“A total of 92 employees and volunteers from local attractions, hotels, restaurants, and retail shops were nominated,” said Fred Uhe, tourism director for Sarpy County Tourism. “Winners were chosen in nine different categories by judges representing Douglas, Sarpy and Pottawattamie counties.

Among the winners are: Christine Patterson, from the Microtel Inn and Suites, who worked her way up from Executive Housekeeper to General Manager. When flooding hit the community she used her position to offer an extremely low rate so those impacted by the floods had an affordable place to stay; Brittany Thornton, senior event manager for Metropolitan Entertainment & Convention Center, who plays a key role in coordinating large scale events such as the Berkshire Hathaway shareholders meeting and the U.S. Olympic Swim Trials; and Zead Basbos, a kitchen steward with Embassy Suites in La Vista known for always getting the job done whether it is a dinner for 20 or 200. Basbos has been working hard to learn English so he will be better prepared to work in every position in the hotel’s kitchen.

In addition, the OMA Tourism Awards Organizing Committee selected Omaha’s Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium President and CEO, Dennis Pate as the 2019 “[Tourism Hero of the Year](#).” Pate is the second recipient of the award.

“The Tourism Hero award honors an industry professional, volunteer, public servant or partner who has provided long-term excellence in leadership and support for the tourism industry,” said Keith Backsen, executive director of Visit Omaha. “Pate embodies all of these qualities.”

“Pates’ contributions in making Omaha’s zoo the number one tourist attraction in the region has an enormous impact on the economy in all three of our counties,” said Mark Eckman, executive director for Council Bluffs Convention and Visitors Bureau. “The zoo continually adds world-class exhibits that provide families from across the country yet another reason to come back year after year.”

Visit Omaha, Sarpy County Tourism and the Council Bluffs Convention & Visitors Bureau partner to present the OMA Tourism Awards. The award ceremony was held May 8 at the Mid-America Center in Council Bluffs. More than 340 people attended. For a complete list of the winners go to www.OMATourismAwards.com.

[Link to Photos](#)

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